

Written Testimony of the Connecticut Society of Eye Physicians
On Proposed Bill No. 1
An Act Increasing Access to Affordable, Quality Health Care Universal Healthcare

The Connecticut Society of Eye Physicians, representing over 92% of Ophthalmologists in the state, applauds the efforts of our state leaders to address this critical issue. It is unconscionable that so many of the state's residents do not have adequate coverage to allow them to get the quality health care they deserve. As you know physicians are finding it more and more difficult to practice medicine today, faced with reduced reimbursements, increased expenses and the bureaucratized red tape of the managed care industry accompanied by the constant struggle to get standards in contracts with the managed care industry. This untenable situation has led many physicians to seek radical change. Many of our medical colleagues support a one payor system, mainly out of sheer frustration at our lack of ability to negotiate or to get simple contractual right, like no unilateral changes to the terms of a contract once a physician has signed the contract.

We are pleased to see Senator Williams looking into this intolerable situation and are eager to help create a workable, effective solution to increasing access to affordable quality health care. The problem of access is not an easy one. It is not simply an issue of numbers. There is an adequate number and distribution of eye doctors in the state of Connecticut for appropriate care of those in need, in fact it has the highest per capita in the country. The problem of access is not geographic, but economic. Plans are either too restrictive in their coverage, too expensive for consumers, or too problematic for the providers to participate.

For universal healthcare to work, we need real coverage plans that make real sense. Patients deserve fair coverage of a realistic array of services, and need to be protected from the predations of plans that offer promises but very little actual coverage, or that strip out many important services in order to masquerade as "affordable". Universal healthcare will only work if it makes sense for physicians [providers], too.

Physicians need real contracts that can't be unilaterally changed after they are signed and viable payment schedules and simpler procedures for those providing the care (physicians and institutions), so they can remain open.

Consumers need true transparency from insurers, revealing not just what hospital and physician charges are, but what they are actually paid, and how much out-of-pocket expense the patient will actually accrue and about how much of the premium dollar actually goes to health care and how much is eaten up by the plan.

This will allow those using healthcare, both providers and consumers to make better decisions. Connecticut is a prosperous state. We owe our citizens decent health care coverage. We implore you to consider some of the issues CSEP has identified as obstacles in the healthcare delivery system and we look forward to working and helping the General Assembly create a healthcare system that works for everyone.